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The town church and yard

HORATIO KING

THE GRAVE.

A POEM

BY ROBERT BLAIR.

With Eight Illustrations by the best Artists.

PHILADELPHIA:
WILLIS P. HAZARD, 178 CHESNUT ST.

1857.

W.P.H.

Horacio King

1857

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LIFE OF BLAIR.

BY S. C. HALL.

It is a common remark, that the lives of men of letters, are in general destitute of incident. But it is more particularly the case in such instances as that now before us, of a clergyman, who considered the duties of his profession as sacred, and whose abode was constantly in the country. But as everything which concerns him must be interesting to the reader, the few particulars of his life that have been collected, will here be detailed.

Robert Blair was born in Edinburgh, in the year 1699. His father, the Rev. David Blair, was one of the chaplains to the king. His grandfather, Rev. Robert Blair, was one of the most distinguished Scottish clergymen in the time of the civil wars. The Poet's son was Solicitor-General for Scotland, and his cousin was Hugh Blair, D. D., the eminent Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the University of Edinburgh.

Having obtained the advantages of a sound and liberal education, and improved those advantages by travel and a residence of "some time" on the continent, he was, in 1731, ordained minister of Athelstaneford, in the county of East Lothian: here the subsequent years of his life were passed, in ease, quiet, and contentment; in the enjoyment of tranquil pleasures, in cultivating literary pursuits, in discharging the duties of his profession, and in the happiness of domestic life.

His tastes were elegant and domestic. Books and flowers seem to have been the only rivals in his thoughts. He was

conversant in optical and microscopical knowledge; a botanist and florist. His rambles were from his fireside to his garden; and although the only record of his genius is of a gloomy character, it is evident that habit and circumstances combined to render him cheerful and happy. As a preacher, he was zealous and animated, discovering much poetical imagination. He married Isabella Law, daughter of Mr. Law of Elvingston, a lady of uncommon beauty and amiable manners. With her father, who had been Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, he had been long and intimately acquainted; and, on the occasion of his death, which happened several years before Blair's marriage with his daughter, he wrote and printed a funeral poem to his memory. By his lady, who survived him several years, he had five sons and one daughter. Our author died of a fever, on the 4th of February, 1746, in the 47th year of his age: and was succeeded in his living at Athelstaneford, by Mr. John Home, the celebrated author of *Douglas*.

“The last end

Of the good man was peace!”

This is all that has been collected relating to this accomplished scholar and elegant poet; whose genius and virtue, though celebrated by some of the most eminent of his poetical contemporaries, have suffered such unmerited neglect, that his name is not to be found in any collection of literary biography. In extenuation, it may be urged, that the life of a country clergyman, constantly engaged in the duties of his profession, in the practice of the domestic virtues, and in the occupation of literature, however respectable such a character may be, can afford slender materials for biography.

Our author's passion for natural history obtained him the correspondence of that celebrated naturalist, Henry Barker, Esq., F. R. S., an intelligent, upright, and benevolent man, who was particularly attentive to the improvement of

natural science, and very solicitous for the prosecution of useful discoveries. With Dr. Doddridge, a man whose learning was respected by Warburton and Newton, and whose piety was venerated by Lyttleton and West, he also cultivated a correspondence; probably through the kindness of Dr. Watts, or the good offices of their common friend, Col. James Gardiner, who was slain at the battle of Prestonpans, Sept. 21, 1745, and affectionately commemorated by Dr. Doddridge, in "Some Remarkable Passages in his Life," published in 1747.

The "Grave" is the only Poem Dr. Blair ever wrote—if we except the lines to the memory of Mr. Law. It is singular that a poet so capable of producing great things—and with ample leisure and ease of mind to do so—should have written nothing else. Even this must have been commenced at an early age. The following letter, written in 1742, addressed to Dr. Doddridge, exhibits an advantageous specimen of Blair's temper and disposition, and contains some interesting information relating to the composition and publication of *The Grave*.

"You will be justly surprised with a letter from one whose name is not so much as known to you: nor shall I offer to make an apology. Though I am entirely unacquainted with your person, I am no stranger to your merit as an author; neither am I altogether unacquainted with your personal character, having often heard honorable mention made of you by my much respected and worthy friends Colonel Gardiner and Lady Frances. About ten months ago, Lady Frances did me the favor to transmit to me some manuscript hymns of yours, with which I was wonderfully delighted. I wish I could, on my part, contribute in any measure to your entertainment, as you have sometimes done to mine, in a very high degree. And that I may show how willing I am to do so, I have desired Dr. Watts to transmit you

a manuscript poem of mine, entitled *The Grave*, written, I hope, in a way not unbecoming my profession as a minister of the Gospel, though the greatest part of it was composed several years before I was clothed with so sacred a character. I was urged by some friends here to whom I showed it, to make it public; nor did I decline it, provided I had the approbation of Dr. Watts, from whom I have received many civilities, and for whom I have ever entertained the highest regard. Yesterday I had a letter from the Doctor, signifying his approbation of the piece, in a manner most obliging. A great deal less from him would have done me no small honor. But, at the same time, he mentions to me, that he had offered it to two booksellers of his acquaintance, who, he tells me, did not care to run the risk of publishing it. They can scarcely think (considering how critical an age we live in, with respect to such kind of writings) that a person living three hundred miles from London could write so as to be acceptable to the fashionable and polite. Perhaps it may be so; though at the same time, I must say, in order to make it more generally liked, I was obliged sometimes to go cross to my own inclination, well knowing that whatever poem is written on a serious argument, must, on that very account, be under peculiar disadvantages; and therefore proper arts must be used to make such a piece go down with a licentious age, which cares for none of those things. I beg pardon for breaking in on moments precious as yours, and hope you will be so kind as to give me your opinion of the poem."

The first edition of "The Grave" was printed at Edinburgh, in 1747, consequently the author never enjoyed the luxury of seeing it in print. Since then, that which the "two booksellers" rejected, has been reprinted perhaps a hundred times, and will never be long out of print while the English language endures. It is to be lamented that the

praise which this poem received was limited to a few friends, and that his attempt to extend his name was discouraged by the ignorance of those who did not "care to run the risk of publishing it." Had circumstances been either less or more favorable to the Poet, he might have left a still richer legacy to posterity.

"The Grave," however, is sufficient to place the writer high in the list of British poets. Its popularity is not alone dependent upon the fine moral tone that pervades it. Not only because it is in the happiest sense of the term "religious," has it been universally read, and as universally admired. The language is rich, nervous, and pathetic. It abounds in pictures—original, striking, and always natural. At times he flies from the actual to the imaginative, but he never passes the bounds of probability. What he depicts—even the strong man in his agony, &c., he might have seen. Above all, the Poet's kindly, generous, and benevolent nature, peers out even in his gloomiest or most harrowing descriptions:—and he at all times bears in mind that the office of a Christian clergyman involves a high and imperative duty. He therefore never loses an opportunity of impressing upon the minds of his readers the solemn lessons it is his business to teach and inculcate. Even in those passages which call upon satire to co-operate with truth—and which sometimes verge too closely upon the ludicrous—his one great object is clearly paramount—to "warn and scare" from the path which alone leads to a grave that must be terrible. His more awful descriptions are, however, at times, relieved by those that are gentle as well as beautiful—the *Apostrophe to Friendship*, "The tie more stubborn far than nature's band," may be quoted as one of the most delicious in the language. *The Grave* is a volume of "pictures to the ear." The representations of the Poet are as vivid as if they were conveyed to us on canvas.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAINTER.	ENGRAVER.
FRONTISPIECE,	CRESWICK,.....	STEEL.
THE BELL,.....	RETZSCH,.....	REASE.
FRIENDSHIP,.....	WARREN,.....	STEEL.
THE FUNERAL PAGEANT,.....	RETZSCH,.....	REASE.
INVOCATION OF PEACE,.....	RETZSCH,.....	REASE.
THE POET,.....	CORBOULD,.....	STEEL.
THE GRAVE,.....	ETCHING CLUB,.....	STEEL.
THE FALL OF THE LEAF,	RETZSCH,.....	REASE.

The Grave.

WHILST some affect the sun, and some the shade,
Some flee the city, some the hermitage,
Their aims as various as the roads they take
In journeying through life; the task be mine
To paint the gloomy horrors of the tomb;
Th' appointed place of rendezvous, where all
These trav'lers meet. Thy succors I implore,
Eternal King! whose potent arm sustains
The keys of hell and death. The Grave, dread thing!
Men shiver when thou'rt named: nature appall'd
Shakes off her wonted firmness. Ah! how dark
Thy long-extended realms, and rueful wastes!
Where nought but silence reigns, and night, dark night,
Dark as was chaos ere the infant sun
Was rolled together, or had tried its beams
Athwart the gloom profound! The sickly taper
By glim'ring through thy low-brow'd misty vaults,
Furr'd round with mouldy damps, and ropy slime,



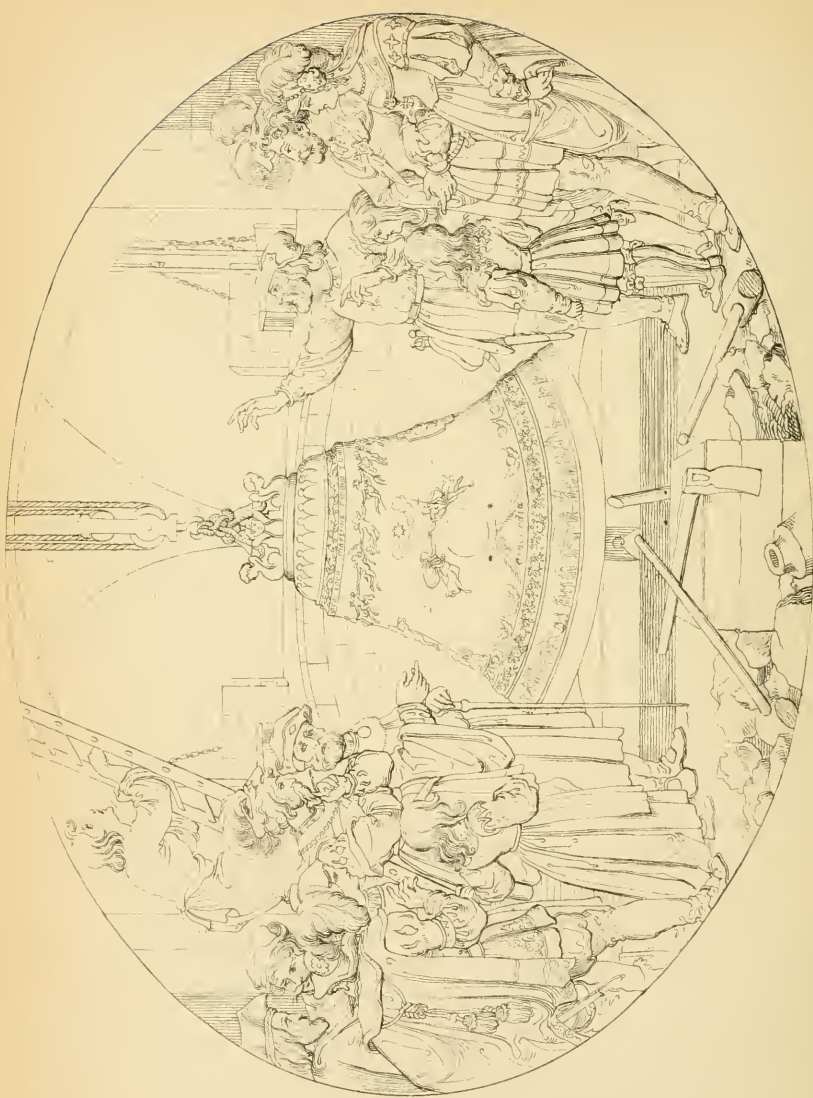
Lets fall a supernumerary horror,
And only serves to make thy night more irksome.
Well do I know thee by thy trusty yew,
Cheerless, unsocial plant ! that loves to dwell
'Midst skulls and coffins, epitaphs and worms ;
Where light-heel'd ghosts, and visionary shades,
Beneath the wan cold moon (as fame reports)
Embodied thick perform their mystic rounds ;
No other merriment, dull tree ! is thine.



The Hallow'd Fane.

SEE yonder hallow'd fane ! the pious work
Of names once famed, now dubious or forgot,
And buried mid'st the wreck of things which were :
There lie interr'd the more illustrious dead.
The wind is up : hark ! how it howls ! methinks,
Till now I never heard a sound so dreary.
Doors creak, and windows clap, and night's fowl bird,
Rook'd in the spire, screams loud ; the gloomy aisles
Black plaster'd, and hung round with shreds or scutcheons,
And tatter'd coats of arms, send back the sound
Laden with heavier airs, from the low vaults,
The mansions of the dead. Rous'd from their slumbers,
In grim array the grizly spectres rise,
Grin horrible, and obstinately sullen
Pass and repass, hush'd as the foot of night.
Again ! the screech-owl shrieks : ungracious sound !
I'll hear no more ; it makes one's blood run chill.





The Churchyard.

QUITE round the pile, a row of rev'rend chms.
Coeval near with that, all ragged show,
Long lash'd by the rude winds : some rift half down
Their branchless trunks : others so thin a-top
That scarce two crows could lodge in the same tree.
Strange things, the neighbors say, have happened here :
Wild shrieks have issued from the hollow tombs :
Dead men have come again and walk'd about :
And the great bell has toll'd unring, untouch'd.
Such tales their cheer, at wake or gossiping.
When it draws near to witching time of night.



The Schulboy.

OFt in the lone church-yard at night I've seen,
By glimpse of moon-shine, chequ'ring through the trees,
The school-boy, with his satchel in his hand,
Whistling aloud to bear his courage up,
And lightly tripping o'er the long flat stones
(With nettles skirted, and with moss o'ergrown)
That tell in homely phrase who lie below ;
Suddenly he starts ! and hears, or thinks he hears,
The sound of something purring at his heels :
Full fast he flies, and dares not look behind him,
Till out of breath he overtakes his fellows ;
Who gather round, and wonder at the tale
Of horrid apparition, tall and ghastly,
That walks at dead of night, or takes his stand
O'er some new-open'd grave ; and, strange to tell !
Evanishes at crowing of the cock.

The Widow.

THE new-made widow too, I've sometimes spied,
Sad sight ! slow moving o'er the prostrate dead :
Listless she crawls along in doleful black,
While bursts of sorrow gush from either eye,
Fast falling down her now untasted cheek.
Prone on the lonely grave of the dear man
She drops ; while busy meddling memory,
In barbarous succession, musters up
The past endearments of their softer hours,
Tenacious of its theme. Still, still she thinks
She sees him, and indulging the fond thought,
Clings yet more closely to the senseless turf,
Nor heeds the passenger who looks that way.





Creswick Del.

Steel Sc.

And sat us down
Upon the sloping cowslip cover'd bank."

Friendship.

INVIDIOUS Grave ! how dost thou rend in sunder
Whom love has knit, and sympathy made one !
A tie more stubborn far than nature's band.
Friendship ! mysterious cement of the soul !
Sweet'ner of life ! and solder of society !
I owe thee much. Thou hast deserv'd from me
Far, far beyond what I can ever pay,
Oft have I prov'd the labors of thy love,
And the warm efforts of the gentle heart
Anxious to please. O ! when my friend and I
In some thiek wood have wander'd heedless on,
Hid from the vulgar eye ; and sat us down
Upon the sloping cowslip-cover'd bank,
Where the pure limpid stream has slid along
In grateful eddies through the underwood,
Sweet murm'ring ; methought, the shrill-tongu'd thrush
Mended his song of love ; the sooty blackbird
Mellow'd his pipe, and soften'd every note :



The eglantine smell'd sweeter, and the rose
Assum'd a dye more deep; whilst every flower
Vied with its fellow-plant in luxury
Of dress. O! then the longest Summer's day
Seem'd too, too much in haste; still the full heart
Had not imparted half: 'twas happiness
Too exquisite to last. Of joys departed,
Not to return, how painful the remembrance!



The Jester.

DULL Grave! thou spoil'st the dance of youthful blood,
Strik'st out the dimple from the cheek of mirth,
And every smirking feature from the face;
Branding our laughter with the name of madness.
Where are the jesters now? the men of health
Complexionally pleasant? where the droll,
Whose very look and gesture was a joke
To clapping theatres and shouting crowds,
And made e'en thick-lipp'd musing Melancholy
To gather up her face into a smile
Before she was aware? Ah! sullen now,
And dumb as the green turf that covers them!

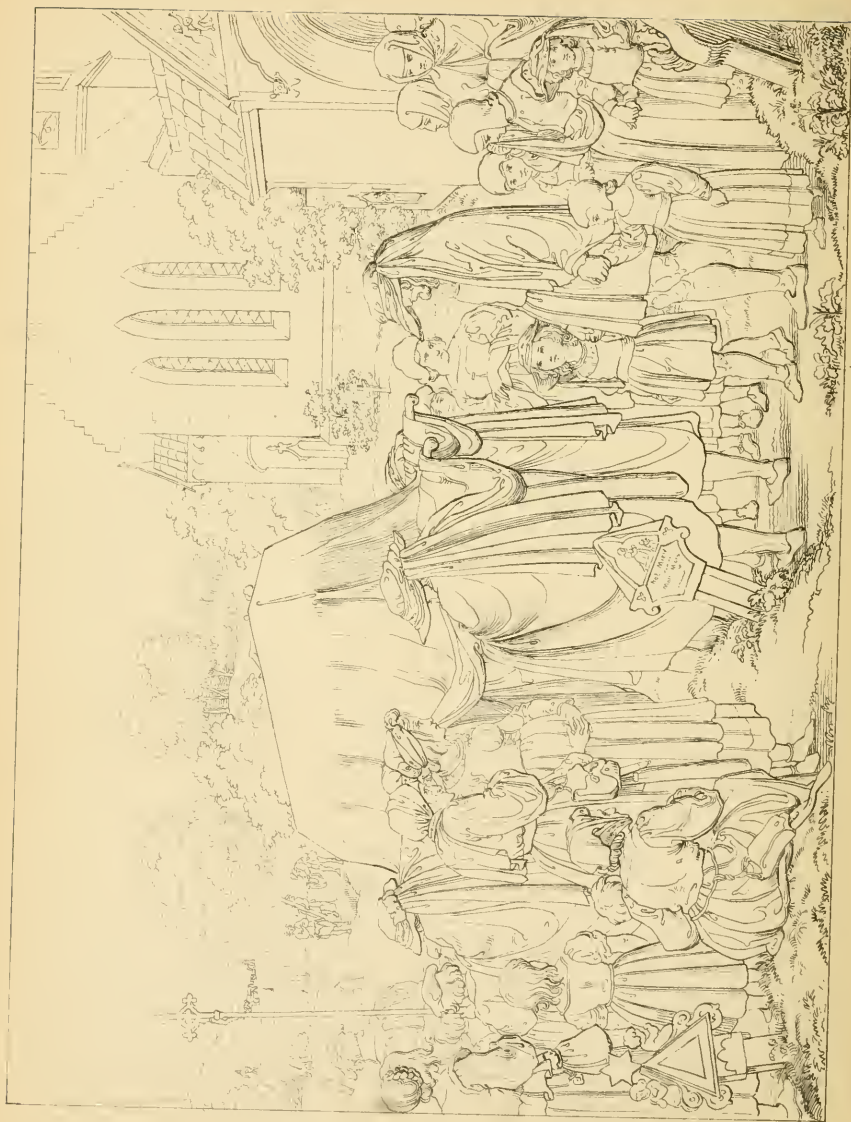


The Warrior King.

WHERE are the mighty thunderbolts of war,
The Roman Cæsars and the Grecian chiefs,
The boast of story? Where the hot-brain'd youth,
Who the tiara at his pleasure tore
From kings of all the then discover'd globe;
And cried, forsooth, because his arm was hamper'd,
And had not room enough to do its work?
Alas! how slim! dishonorably slim!
And cramm'd into a space we blush to name.
Proud royalty! how alter'd in thy looks!
How blank thy features, and how wan thy hue!
Son of the morning! whither art thou gone?
Where hast thou hid thy many spangled-head,
And the majestic menace of thine eyes,
Felt from afar? pliant and powerless now:
Like new-born infant bound up in his swathes,
Or victim tumbled flat upon his back,
That throbs beneath the sacrificer's knife:
Mute must thou bear the strife of little tongues,



And coward insults of the base-born crowd,
That grudge a privilege thou never hadst,
But only hoped for in the peaceful Grave,
Of being unmolested and alone.
Arabia's gums and odoriferous drugs,
And honors by the heralds duly paid
In mode and form, e'en to a very scruple ;
O cruel irony! these come too late ;
And only mock whom they were meant to honor.
Surely, there's not a dungeon slave that's buried
In the highway, unshrouded and uncoffin'd,
But lies as soft, and sleeps as sound as he.
Sorry pre-eminence of high descent
Above the baser born, to rot in state !



The Funeral Pageant.

BUT see ! the well-plumed hearse comes nodding on,
Stately and slow ; and properly attended
By the whole sable tribe, that painful watch
The sick man's door, and live upon the dead,
By letting out their persons by the hour
To mimic sorrow, when the heart's not sad.
How rich the trappings, now they're all unfurl'd
And glitt'ring in the sun ! Triumphant entries
Of conquerors, and coronation pomps,
In glory scarce exceed. Great gluts of people
Retard th' unwieldy show ; whilst from the casements,
And houses' tops, ranks behind ranks close wedg'd
Hang bellying o'er. But tell us, why this waste ?
Why this ado in earthing up a carcase
That's fall'n into disgrace, and in the nostril
Smells horrible ! Ye undertakers ! tell us,
'Midst all the gorgeous figures you exhibit,
Why is the principal conceal'd, for which
You make this mighty stir ? 'Tis wisely done :
What would offend the eye in a good picture,
The painter casts discreetly into shades.



Honor.

PROUD lineage ! now how little thou appear'st !
Below the envy of the private man !
Honor, that meddlesome officious ill,
Pursues thee e'en to death ; nor there stops short,
Strange persecution ! when the Grave itself
Is no protection from rude sufferance.



F A M E .

ABSURD ! to think to over-reach the Grave,
And from the wreck of names to rescue our's !
The best concerted schemes men lay for fame
Die fast away : only themselves die faster.
The far-famed sculptor, and the laurell'd bard,
These bold insurers of eternal fame,
Supply their little feeble aids in vain.
The tapering pyramid, the Egyptian's pride,
And wonder of the world ! whose spiky top
Has wounded the thick cloud, and long out-liv'd
The angry shaking of the winter's storm ;
Yet spent at last by th' injuries of Heaven,
Shatter'd with age, and furrow'd o'er with years,
The mystic cone, with hieroglyphics crusted,
Gives way. O lamentable sight ! at once
The labor of whole ages lumbers down,
A hideous and mis-shapen length of ruins.
Sepulchral columns wrestle but in vain
With all-subduing Time : his cank'ring hand

With calm, deliberate malice wasted them :
Worn on the edge of days, the brass consumes,
The busto moulders, and the deep cut marble,
Unsteady to the steel, gives up its charge.
Ambition, half convicted of her folly,
Hangs down the head, and reddens at the tale.



The Tyrant.

HERE all the mighty troublers of the earth,
Who swam to sov'reign rule through seas of blood :
Th' oppressive, sturdy, man-destroying villains,
Who ravaged kingdoms, and laid empires waste,
And in a cruel wantonness of power
Thinn'd states of half their people, and gave up
To want the rest ; now, like a storm that's spent,
Lie hush'd, and meanly sneak behind thy covert.
Vain thought ! to hide them from the general scorn,
That haunts and dogs them like an injur'd ghost,
Implacable. Here too the petty tyrant,
Whose scant domains geographer ne'er noticed.
And well for neighb'ring grounds, of arm as short :
Who fix'd his iron talons on the poor,
And grip'd them, like some lordly beast of prey,
Deaf to the forceful cries of gnawing hunger,
And piteous, plaintive voice of misery
(As if a slave was not a shred of nature,
Of the same common substance with his lord) :



Now tame and humble, like a child that's whipp'd,
Shakes hands with dust and calls the worm his kinsman ;
Nor pleads his rank and birthright. Under ground
Precedency's a jest ; vassal and lord,
Grossly familiar, side by side consume.

Flattery.

WHEN self-esteem, or others' adulation,
Would cunningly persuade us we were something
Above the common level of our kind ;
The Grave gainsays the smooth-complexion'd flatt'ry,
And with blunt truth acquaints us what we are.



Beauty.

BEAUTY! thou pretty plaything! dear deceit!
That steals so softly o'er the stripling's heart,
And gives it a new pulse unknown before,
The Grave discredits thee: thy charms expung'd,
Thy roses faded, and thy lillies soil'd,
What hast thou more to boast of? Will thy lovers
Flock round thee now, to gaze and do thee homage?
Methinks I see thee with thy head low laid:
Whilst surfeited upon thy damask cheek,
The high-fed worm, in lazy volumes roll'd,
Riots unscar'd. For this was all thy caution?
For this thy painful labors at thy glass,
T' improve those charms, and keep them in repair,
For which the spoiler thanks thee not? Foul feeder!
Coarse fare and carrion please thee full as well,
And leave as keen a relish on the sense.
Look, how the fair one weeps! the conscious tears
Stand thick as dew-drops on the bells of flowers:
Honest effusion! the swoln heart in vain
Works hard to put a gloss on its distress.

Strength.

STRENGTH, too! thou surly, and less gentle boast
Of those that laugh loud at the village ring!
A fit of common sickness pulls thee down
With greater ease than e'er thou didst the stripling
That rashly dared thee to th' unequal fight.
What groan was that I heard? deep groan indeed!
With anguish heavy laden! let me trace it:
From yonder bed it comes, where the strong man.
By stronger arm belabor'd, gasps for breath
Like a hard-hunted beast. How his great heart
Beats thick! his roomy chest by far too scant
To give the lungs full play. What now avail
The strong-built sinewy limbs, and well-spread shoulders!
See how he tugs for life, and lays about him,
Mad with his pain! eager he catches hold
Of what comes next to hand, and grasps it hard.
Just like a creature drowning! hideous sight!
O how his eyes stand out, and stare full ghastly!
Whilst the distemper's rank and deadly venom



Shoots like a burning arrow 'cross his bowels,
And drinks his marrow up. Heard you that groan?
It was his last. See how the great Goliath,
Just like a child that brawl'd itself to rest,
Lies still. What mean'st thou then, O mighty boaster,
To vaunt of nerves of thine? What means the bull,
Unconscious of his strength, to play the coward,
And flee before a feeble thing like man;
That, knowing well the slackness of his arm,
Trusts only in the well-invented knife!



The Sage.

WITH study pale, and midnight vigils spent,
The star-surveying sage, close to his eye
Applies the sight-invigorating tube,
And trav'ling through the boundless length of space
Marks well the courses of the far-seen orbs,
That roll with regular confusion there,
In ecstasy of thought. But ah! proud man!
Great heights are hazardous to the weak head:
Soon, very soon, thy firmest footing fails,
And down thou dropp'st into that darksome place,
Where nor device nor knowledge ever came.



The Orator.

HERE the tongue-warrior lies ! disabled now.
Disarm'd, dishonor'd, like a wretch that's gagg'd,
And cannot tell his ail to passers-by.
Great man of language ! whence this mighty change,
This dumb despair, and drooping of the head ?
Though strong Persuasion hung upon thy lip,
And sly Insinuation's softer arts
In ambush lay about thy flowing tongue ;
Alas ! how chop-fall'n now ! thick mists and silence
Rest, like a weary cloud upon thy breast
Unceasing. Ah ! where is the lifted arm,
The strength of action, and the force of words,
The well-turn'd period, and the well-tun'd voice,
With all the lesser ornaments of phrase ?
Ah ! fled forever, as they ne'er had been !
Ras'd from the book of fame : or, more provoking,
Perhaps some hackney hunger-bitten scribbler
Insults thy memory, and blots thy tomb
With long flat narrative, or duller rhymes
With heavy halting pace, that drawl along ;
Enough to rouse a dead man into rage,
And warm, with red resentment, the wan cheek.



The Doctor.

HERE the great masters of the healing art,
These mighty mock defrauders of the tomb,
Spite of their juleps and catholicons,
Resign to fate. Proud Æsculapius' son,
Where are thy boasted implements of art,
And all thy well-cramm'd magazines of health?
Nor hill, nor vale, as far as ship could go,
Nor margin of the gravel-bottom'd brook,
Escap'd thy rifling hand: from stubborn shrubs
Thou wrung'st their shy retiring virtues out,
And vex'd them in the fire; nor fly, nor insect,
Nor writhy snake, escap'd thy deep research.
But why this apparatus? why this cost?
Tell us, thou doughty keeper from the grave!
Where are thy recipes and cordials now,
With the long list of vouchers for thy cures?
Alas! thou speak'st not. The-bold impostor
Looks not more silly, when the cheat's found out.



The Miser.

HERE the lank-sided miser, worst of felons !
Who meanly stole (discreditable shift!)
From back and belly too their proper cheer :
Eas'd of a tax it irk'd the wretch to pay
To his own carcase, now lies cheaply lodg'd,
By clam'rous appetites no longer teas'd,
Nor tedious bills of charges and repairs.
But, ah ! where are his rents, his comings in ?
Ay ! now you've made the rich man poor indeed :
Robb'd of his gods, what has he left behind ?
O cursed lust of gold ! when for thy sake
The fool throws up his interest in both worlds,
First starved in this, then damn'd in that to come.



The Wealthy.

How shocking must thy summons be, O Death!
'To him who is at ease in his possessions!
Who, counting on long years of pleasure here,
Is quite unfurnish'd for that world to come!
In that dread moment, how the frantic soul
Raves round the walls of her clay tenement,
Runs to each avenue, and shrieks for help,
But shrieks in vain! how wishfully she looks
On all she's leaving, now no longer hers!
A little longer, yet a little longer,
O might she stay to wash away her stains,
And fit her for her passage: mournful sight!
Her very eyes weep blood; and every groan
She heaves is big with horror; but the foe,
Like a staunch murd'rer, steady to his purpose,
Pursues her close through every lane of life,
Nor misses once the track, but presses on:
'Till forced at last to the tremendous verge,
At once she sinks to everlasting ruin.





Etching Club Del.

Steel Sc

That awful gulf no mortal ever repass'd
To tell what's doing on the other side!"

The Final Moment.

SURE 'tis a serious thing to die, my soul !
What a strange moment must it be, when near
The journey's end, thou hast the gulf in view !
That awful gulf no mortal ere repass'd
To tell what's doing on the other side !
Nature runs back and shudders at the sight,
And every life-string bleeds at thoughts of parting !
For part they must : body and soul must part ;
Fond couple ! link'd more close than wedded pair.
This wings its way to its Almighty Source,
The witness of its actions, now its judge ;
That drops into the dark and noisome grave,
Like a disabled pitcher, of no use.

The Suicide.

IF death were nothing, and nought after death :
If when men died, at once they ceas'd to be,
Returning to the barren womb of nothing,
Whence first they sprung ; then might the debauchee,
Untrembling, mouth the Heavens ; then might the
drunkard
Reel over his full bowl, and when 'tis drain'd,
Fill up another to the brim, and laugh
At the poor bugbear Death ; then might the wretch
Who's weary of the world, and tired of life,
At once give each inquietude the slip,
By stealing out of being when he pleased,
And by that way, whether by hemp or steel ;
Death's thousand doors stand open. Who could force
The ill-pleas'd guest to sit out his full time,
Or blame him if he goes ? Sure he does well
That helps himself as timely as he can,
When able. But if there's an hereafter,
And that there is, conscience, uninfluenc'd
And suffer'd to speak out, tells every man,



Then must it be an awful thing to die ;
More horrid yet to die by one's own hand.
Self-murder ! name it not ; our island's shame,
That makes her the reproach of neighb'ring states.
Shall nature, swerving from her earliest dictate,
Self-preservation, fall by her own act ?
Forbid it, heaven ! let not, upon disgust,
The shameless hand be foully crimson'd o'er
With blood of its own lord. Dreadful attempt !
Just reeking from self-slaughter, in a rage
To rush into the presence of our Judge !
As if we challenge him to do his worst,
And matter'd not his wrath. Unheard-of tortures
Must be reserved for such : these herd together ;
The common damn'd shun their society,
And look upon themselves as fiends less foul.
Our time is fix'd ! and all our days are number'd ;
How long, how short, we know not : this we know,
Duty requires we calmly wait the summons,
Nor dare to stir 'till Heaven shall give permission :
Like sentries that must keep their destin'd stand,
And wait th' appointed hour 'till they're relieved.
Those only are the brave who keep their ground,
And keep it to the last. To run away



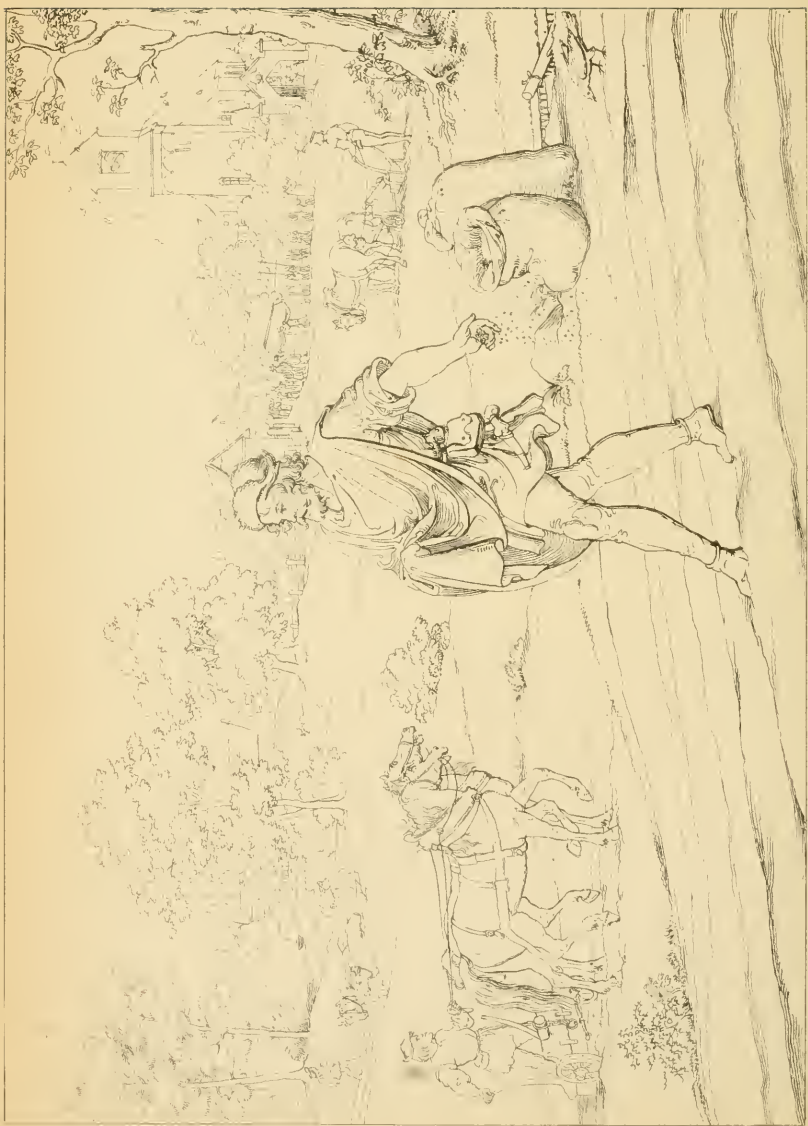
Is but a coward's trick : to run away
From this world's ills, that at the very worst
Will soon blow o'er, thinking to mend ourselves,
By boldly venturing on a world unknown,
And plunging headlong in the dark ! 'tis mad :
No frenzy half so desperate as this.

The Death Secret.

TELL us, ye dead! will none of you, in pity
To those you left behind, disclose the secret?
O! that some courteous ghost would blab it out,
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be.
I've heard that souls departed have sometimes
Forwarn'd men of their death: 'twas kindly done
To knock and give the alarm. But what means
This stinted charity? 'tis but lame kindness
That does its work by halves. Why might you not
Tell us what 'tis to die? Do the strict laws
Of your society forbid your speaking
Upon a point so nice? I'll ask no more;
Sullen, like lamps in sepulchres, your shine
Enlightens but yourselves: well, 'tis no matter:
A very little time will clear up all,
And make us learn'd as you are, and as close.

The Sexton.

DEATH'S shafts fly thick! Here falls the village swain,
And there his pamper'd lord! The cup goes round,
And who so artful as to put it by?
'Tis long since death had the majority;
Yet strange! the living lay it not to heart.
See yonder maker of the dead man's bed,
The sexton, hoary-headed chronicle!
Of hard unmeaning face, down which ne'er stole
A gentle tear; with mattock in his hand
Digs through whole rows of kindred and acquaintance,
By far his juniors! scarce a skull's cast up,
But well he knew its owner, and can tell
Some passage of his life. Thus, hand in hand,
The sot has walk'd with Death twice twenty years:
And yet ne'er younker on the green laughs louder,
Or clubs a smuttier tale; when drunkard's meet,
None sings a merrier catch, or lends a hand
More willing to his cup. Poor wretch! he minds not
That soon some trusty brother of the trade
Shall do for him what he has done for thousands.



Death Universal.

ON this side, and on that, men see their friends
Drop off, like leaves in Autumn ; yet launch out
Into fantastic schemes, which the long livers
In the world's hale and undegenerate days
Could scarcely have leisure for ; fools that we are !
Never to think of Death and of ourselves
At the same time : as if to learn to die
Were no concern of ours. O more than sottish !
For creatures of a day, in gamesome mood,
To frolic on eternity's dread brink,
Unapprehensive ; when, for aught we know,
The very first swoln surge shall sweep us in.
Think we, or think we not, Time hurries on
With a resistless, unremitting stream,
Yet treads more soft than e'er did midnight thief,
That slides his hand under the miser's pillow,
And carries off his prize. What is this world ?
What, but a spacious burial-field unwall'd,
Strew'd with Death's spoils, the spoils of animals
Savage and tame, and full of dead men's bones ?



The cool shade
The toll take echo, and the bubbling stream

The very turf on which we tread once lived :
And we that live must lend our carcases
To cover our own offspring : in their turns
They too must cover theirs. 'Tis here all meet :
The shiv'ring Iclander, and the sun-burnt Moor ;
Men of all climes, that never met before ;
And of all creeds, the Jew, the Turk, the Christian.
Here the proud prince, the favorite yet prouder,
His sov'reign's keeper, and the people's scourge,
Are huddled out of sight. Here lie abash'd
The great negociators of the earth,
And celebrated masters of the balance,
Deep read in stratagems and wiles of courts ;
Now vain their treaty-skill ! Death scorns to treat.
Here the o'erloaded slave flings down his burden
From his gall'd shoulders ; and when the cruel tyrant,
With all his guards and tools of power about him,
Is meditating new unheard-of hardships,
Mocks his short arm, and quick as thought escapes,
Where tyrants vex not, and the weary rest.
Here the warm lover, leaving the cool shade,
The tell-tale echo, and the babbling stream,
Time out of mind the fav'rite seats of love,
Fast by his gentle mistress lays him down
Unblasted by foul tongue. Here friends and foes



Lie close, unmindful of their former feuds.
The lawn-robed prelate, and plain presbyter,
Ere while that stood aloof, as shy to meet,
Familiar mingle here, like sister streams
That some rude interposing rock had split.
Here is the large-limb'd peasant ; here the child
Of a span long, that never saw the sun,
Nor press'd the nipple, strangled in life's porch :
Here is the mother with her sons and daughters :
The barren wife ; the long demurring maid,
Whose lonely unappropriated sweets
Smiled like yon knot of cowslips on the cliff,
Not to be come at by the willing hand.
Here are the prude severe and gay coquette,
The sober widow and young green virgin,
Cropp'd like a rose before 'tis fully blown,
Or half its worth disclosed. Strange medley here !
Here garrulous old age winds up his tale ;
And jovial youth, of lightsome vacant heart,
Whose every day was made of melody,
Hears not the voice of mirth : the shrill tongu'd shrew,
Meek as the turtle-dove, forgets her chiding.
Here are the wise, the generous, and the brave :
The just, the good, the worthless, the profane.



The downright clown, and perfectly well-bred :
The fool, the churl, the scoundrel, and the mean :
The supple statesman and the patriot stern ;
The wrecks of nations and the spoils of time,
With all the lumber of six thousand years.

The Exile from Paradise.

Poor man! how happy once in thy first state!
When yet but warm from thy great Maker's hand,
He stamp'd thee with his image, and well pleas'd
Smiled on his last fair work! then all was well,
Sound was the body, and the soul serene;
Like two sweet instruments, ne'er out of tune,
That play their several parts. Nor head nor heart
Offer'd to ache; nor was there cause they should,
For all was pure within: no fell remorse,
Nor anxious castings up of what might be,
Alarm'd his peaceful bosom: Summer seas
Show not more smooth, when kiss'd by Southern winds,
Just ready to expire. Scarcely importun'd,
The generous soil, with a luxuriant hand,
Offer'd the various produce of the year,
And every thing most perfect in its kind.
Blessed, thrice blessed days! but, ah, how short!
Bless'd as the pleasing dreams of holy men,
But fugitive, like those, and quickly gone.



O slipp'ry state of things ! What sudden turns,
What strange vicissitudes, in the first leaf
Of man's sad history ! to-day most happy,
And ere to-morrow's sun has set, most abject !
How scant the space between these vast extremes !
Thus far'd it with our sire : not long he enjoy'd
His Paradise : scarce had the happy tenant
Of the fair spot due time to prove its sweets,
Or sum them up, when straight he must be gone,
Ne'er to return again. And must he go ?
Can nought compound for the first dire offence
Of erring man ? Like one who is condemn'd.
Fain would he trifle time with idle talk,
And parley with his fate. But 'tis in vain.
Not all the lavish odors of the place,
Offer'd in incense, can procure his pardon,
Or mitigate his doom. A mighty angel,
With flaming sword, forbids his longer stay,
And drives the loit'rer forth ; nor must he take
One last and farewell round. At once he lost
His glory and his God. If mortal now,
And sorely maim'd, no wonder. Man has sinn'd.
Sick of his bliss, and bent on new adventures,
Evil he would needs try : nor tried in vain.
Dreadful experiment ! destructive measure !



Where the worst thing could happen, is success.
Alas! too well he sped; the good he scorn'd
Stalk'd off reluctant, like an ill-used ghost,
Not to return; or if it did, its visits,
Like those of angels, short, and far between:
Whilst the black dæmon, with his hell scap'd train,
Admitted once into its better room,
Grew loud and mutinous, nor would be gone:
Lording it o'er the man, who now too late
Saw the rash error which he could not mend;
An error fatal not to him alone,
But to his future sons, his fortune's heirs.
Inglorious bondage! human nature groans
Beneath a vassalage so vile and cruel,
And its vast body bleeds through every vein.

The Results of Sin.

WHAT havoc hast thou made, foul monster, sin !
Greatest and first of ills ! the fruitful parent
Of woes of all dimensions ! but for thee
Sorrow had never been. All noxious things
Of vilest nature, other sorts of evils,
Are kindly circumscrib'd, and have their bounds.
The fierce volcano, from its burning entrails
That belches molten stone and globes of fire,
Involv'd in pitchy clouds of smoke and stench,
Mars the adjacent fields for some leagues round,
And there it stops. The big swoln inundation,
Of mischief more diffusive, raving loud,
Buries whole tracts of country, threat'ning more :
But that too has its shore it cannot pass.
More dreadful far than these ! sin has laid waste,
Not here and there a country, but a world :
Despatching at a wide extended blow
Entire mankind, and for their sakes defacing
A whole creation's beauty with rude hands :



Blasting the foodful grain, the loaded branches,
And marking all along its way with ruin.
Accursed thing ! O where shall fancy find
A proper name to call thee by, expressive
Of all thy horrors ? Pregnant womb of ills !
Of temper so transcendently malign,
That toads and serpents of most deadly kind
Compared to thee are harmless. Sickness
Of every size and symptom, racking pains,
And bluest plagues are thine ! See how the fiend
Profusely scatters the contagion round !
While deep-mouth'd Slaughter, bellowing at her heels,
Wades deep in blood new spilt : yet for to-morrow
Shapes out new work of great uncommon daring,
And inly pines 'till the dread blow be struck.



The Rapaciousness of Death.

BUT hold! I've gone too far; too much discover'd
My father's nakedness and nature's shame.
Here let me pause; and drop an honest tear,
One burst of filial duty, and condolence,
O'er all those ample deserts Death hath spread,
This chaos of mankind. O great man-eater!
Whose ev'ry day is carnival, not sated yet!
Unheard-of epicure, without a fellow!
The veriest gluttons do not always cram:
Some intervals of abstinence are sought
To edge the appetite; thou seekest none.
Methinks the countless swarms thou hast devour'd,
And thousands that each hour thou gobbl'st up,
This, less than this, might gorge thee to the full.
But, ah! rapacious still, thou gap'st for more;
Like one, whole days defrauded of his meals,
On whom lank Hunger lays his skinny hand,
And whets to keenest eagerness his cravings.
As if Diseases, Massacres, and Poison,
Famine, and War, were not thy caterers!



The Resurrection.

BUT know, that thou must render up thy dead,
And with high interest too ! they are not thine ;
But only in thy keeping for a season,
'Till the great promised day of restitution ;
When loud diffusive sound, from brazen trump
Of strong-lung'd cherub, shall alarm thy captives,
And rouse the long, long sleepers into life,
Day-light, and liberty. . . .
Then must thy gates fly open, and reveal the minds
That lay long forming under ground,
In their dark cells immured ; but now full ripe,
And pure as silver from the crucible,
That twice has stood the torture of the fire,
And inquisition of the forge. We know
Th' illustrious Deliverer of mankind,
The Son of God, thee foil'd. Him in thy power
Thou could'st not hold ; self-vigorous he rose,
And, shaking off thy fetters, soon retook
Those spoils his voluntary yielding lent,
(Sure pledge of our releasement from thy thrall !)



Twice twenty days he sojourn'd here on earth.
And show'd himself alive to chosen witnesses,
By proofs so strong, that the most slow assenting
Had not a scruple left. This having done,
He mounted up to Heaven. Methinks I see him
Climb the aerial heights, and glide along
Athwart the severing clouds: but the faint eye,
Flung backwards in the chase, soon drops its hold.
Disabled quite, and jaded with pursuing.
Heaven's portals wide expand to let him in;
Nor are his friends shut out: as some great prince
Not for himself alone procures admission,
But for his train; it was his royal will
That where he is, there should his followers be.
Death only lies between: a gloomy path!
Made yet more gloomy by our coward fears:
But nor untrod, nor tedious: the fatigue
Will soon go off. Besides, there's no bye-road
To bliss. Then why, like ill-condition'd children,
Start we at transient hardships in the way
Which leads to purer air and softer skies,
And a ne'er setting sun? Fools that we are!
We wish to be where sweets unwith'ring bloom
But straight our wish revoke, and will not go.
So have I seen, upon a summer's even,

L. of C.

Fast by the rivulet's brink, a youngster play ;
How wishfully he looks to stem the tide !
This moment resolute, next unresolv'd ;
At last, he dips his foot ; but, as he dips,
His fears redouble, and he runs away
From th' inoffensive stream, unmindful now
Of all the flowers which paint the farther bank,
And smiled so sweet of late. Thrice welcome Death !
That, after many a painful, bleeding step,
Conducts us to our home, and lands us safe
On the long-wish'd-for shore. Prodigious change !
Our bane turn'd to a blessing ! Death disarm'd.
Loses its fellness quite : all thanks to Him
Who scourged the venom out.

The Good Man.

SURE the last end
Of the good man is peace! How calm his exit!
Night-dews fall not more gently to the ground,
Nor weary worn-out winds expire so soft.
Behold him in the evening-tide of life,
A life well-spent, whose early care it was
His riper years should not upbraid his green:
By unperceiv'd degrees he wears away:
Yet, like the sun, seems larger at his setting.
High in his faith and hopes, look how he reaches
After the prize in view! and, like a bird
That's hamper'd, struggles hard to get away:
While the glad gates of sight are wide expanded
To let new glories in, the first fair fruits
Of the last-coming harvest. Then, O then!
Each earth-born joy grows vile, or disappears,
Shrunk to a thing of naught. O how he longs
To have his passport sign'd, and be dismiss'd!
'Tis done, and now he's happy! The glad soul
Has not a wish uncrown'd. E'en the lag flesh



Rests too in hope of meeting once again
Its better half, never to sunder more.
Nor shall it hope in vain : the time draws on
When not a single spot of burial-earth,
Whether on land or in the spacious sea,
But must give back its long committed dust
Inviolate : and faithfully shall these
Make up the full account ! not the least atom
Embezzled, or mislaid, of the whole tale.
Each soul shall have a body ready furnish'd ;
And each shall have his own. Hence ye profane !
Ask not, how this can be ? Sure the same power
Who rear'd the piece at first, and took it down,
Can re-assemble the loose scatter'd parts,
And put them as they were. Almighty God
Has done much more ; nor is His arm impair'd
Through length of days : and what He can He will :
His faithfulness stands bound to see it done.



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